

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 111700Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1780

S E C R E T BEIRUT 14827

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR US LE

SUBJECT: US-LEBANESE RELATIONS

REF: STATE 270188

1. I MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA AT HIS HOME AT 8:30 P.M. LOCAL DEC 10. I DELIVERED THE SECRETARY'S LETTER AND COMMENTED AS INSTRUCTED ALONG THE LINES OF PARA 1 REFTEL.

2. AFTER READING THE LETTER IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT TAQLA WAS UNHAPPY AND EMBARRASSED. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE THE EXACT CAUSE OF HIS UNHAPPINESS EXCEPT THAT HE EXPECTED A BIT MORE DETAIL AS TO THE INQUIRY AND ALSO THE REITERATION OF THE APOLOGY CONTAINED IN THE SECRETARY'S LETTER TO TAQLA OF NOVEMBER 14, WHICH HE WAS PLEASED WITH. OBVIOUSLY EMBARRASSED, TAQLA EXPRESSED THE FEAR, INDEED THE CONVICTION THAT THE LETTER WOULD NOT MOLLIFY THE PRESIDENT AND CONSEQUENTLY HE WAS RELUCTANT TO SHOW IT TO HIM. HE THEN SUDDENLY STOPPED SHORT AND STATED THAT TO END THE ISSUE QUICKLY, A RADICAL APPROACH WAS REQUIRED. WHILE TAQLA HIMSELF WOULD NOW BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO CONSIDER THE MATTER CLOSED, HE EXPLAINED AGAIN THAT THE PROBLEM CENTERED ON PRESIDENT FRANGIE PERSONALLY; THAT FRANGIE AS CHIEF OF STATE HAD (IN HIS OWN MIND) BEEN PERSONALLY INSULTED AND THAT IF HIS ATTITUDE WAS TO BE CHANGED QUICKLY, HE

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WOULD HAVE TO OBTAIN PERSONAL SATISFACTION. TAQLA WAS

ALMOST CERTAIN THAT IF PRESIDENT FORD WOULD WRITE FRANGIE A FRIENDLY LETTER THE MATTER WOULD BE ENDED VERY QUICKLY. HE SAID HE HAD ENDEAVORED TO PROBE THE PRESIDENT'S THINKING RECENTLY AND THE LATTER SIMPLY REFUSED TO DISCUSS THE MATTER. TAQLA SUGGESTED A LETTER WHICH COULD BE BRIEF BUT SHOULD CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- A) THAT PRESIDENT FORD AWARE OF REGRETTABLE INCIDENT,
- B) THAT HE ASSOCIATES HIMSELF WITH REGRETS ALREADY EXPRESSED BY SECRETARY AND AMBASSADOR GODLEY,
- C) HOPES THAT INCIDENT WOULD NOW BE CONSIDERED CLOSED IN INTEREST OF RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES.

3. IN RESPONSE I REPEATED THAT MY GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED THAT WE HAD DONE ALL THAT COULD BE REASONABLY EXPECTED AND THAT IN THAT CONTEXT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE MOST DIFFICULT FOR US TO OBTAIN SUCH A LETTER. WITHOUT SUCH A LETTER WHAT DID HE SUGGEST? HE REPLIED THAT AS HE HAD MENTIONED BEFORE, AMBASSADOR GODLEY COULD RETURN ANY TIME HE WANTED. THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS HIS BEING RECEIVED BY THE PRESIDENT. GODLEY COULD RETURN, CARRY ON HIS BUSINESS WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND HE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WOULD WORK OVER A PERIOD OF TIME TO TRY TO MOLLIFY THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION. I THEN SUGGESTED THAT IF SUCH A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT FORD WERE OBTAINED, AMBASSADOR GODLEY SHOULD BRING THE LETTER BACK WITH HIM. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAW NO PROBLEM BUT NOTED THAT THE LETTER SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO HIM. HE REPEATED THAT IN SUCH A CASE, HE WAS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT SHORTLY THEREAFTER THE AMBASSADOR, THE PRESIDENT AND HIMSELF "WOULD ALL HAVE A WHISKEY TOGETHER."

4. COMMENT: AS AMBASSADOR GODLEY IS AWARE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD ALREADY RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF LETTER FROM PRESIDENT FORD TO PRESIDENT FRANGIE ON THE INCIDENT BOTH WITH AMBASSADOR GODLEY AND MYSELF. WE HAVE UP TO NOW BOTH DISCOURAGED THE IDEA. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE CHARACTER AND THE FEELINGS OF FRANGIE, I

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STRONGLY DOUBT THAT FRANGIE IS GOING TO ALTER HIS ATTITUDE IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH A LETTER. IF WE WANT TO SETTLE THE MATTER QUICKLY THIS IS THE WAY. THERE IS, OF COURSE, ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE LETTER WON'T WORK EITHER BUT TAQLA SEEMED QUITE CONFIDENT THAT IT WOULD. I MIGHT ADD THAT COLONEL DAHDAH, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PUBLIC SECURITY, RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH A LETTER IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT WITH ME AT LUNCH AT MY

HOME DEC 11. DAHDAH WHO IS CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT AND WHOSE BROTHER IS MARRIED TO THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER, WAS CATEGORIC THAT IF SUCH A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT REFERRED TO THE INCIDENT, FRANGIE WOULD BE SATISFIED AND THE MATTER CLOSED.

5. IF SUCH A LETTER IS FEASIBLE, I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT AMBASSADOR GODLEY BRING IT BACK WITH HIM IN ORDER THAT HE MAY HAVE SOMETHING WITH HIM AND ALSO, AND MORE IMPORTANT, RECEIVE IN THE EYES OF THE LEBANESE CREDIT FOR OBTAINING THE LETTER. IF A LETTER IS NOT FEASIBLE, I SUGGEST THAT AMBASSADOR GODLEY RETURN IN ANY EVENT AND LET TIME RUN ITS COURSE WITH THE PRESIDENT. I SIMPLY DON'T THINK THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE SAVE THE LETTER MENTIONED ABOVE WHICH WE CAN DO NOW. NEITHER DO I THINK GETTING TOUGH WITH THEM WOULD BE VERY PRODUCTIVE. FRANGIE IS TOO DOMINATED BY CONSIDERATIONS OF PRIDE TO BE MOVED BY TOUGHNESS. UNFORTUNATELY, IN MY JUDGMENT, IT WOULD ONLY MAKE HIM MORE STUBBORN AND MORE DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH.

6. IN CLOSING I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE THAT TAQLA IS AS FRUSTRATED AS WE ARE IN HIS PERSISTENT EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THIS UNFORTUNATE MATTER.  
HOUGHTON

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NNN

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